



Brief: APRM for indigenous rights.

Indigenous peoples in Africa do not enjoy the same rights and freedoms of the majority of other citizens and in some instances, residents. Ethnic, minority and select religious groups find themselves as outliers in their own countries of birth. Displaced from their land, not recognised by government or living in underserved areas; inequalities exist in income, service delivery, opportunities and work. This includes the rights to health and education that might not accommodate their needs, culture and beliefs (Mulvagh & Braun, 2008). The same can be applied to equality before the law; where access in language, cost and protection are impractical.

The framing of 'Indigenous' in Africa's context can often be disputed. This is largely attributed to ancestral claims to land amidst large migrations of different groups such as the Bantu-speaking agropastoralists who moved from today's Western to Southern Africa around and/or during 1000 BC (Barume, 2014). Subsequent migrations of Arab language and culture spread across today's North and Eastern Africa preceding European-led colonisation. Colonial rulers favoured dominant, food-producing groups over the 'aboriginals' often referred to those who occupied land before Bantu-speaking groups (Matume, 2007). Thus, first nation peoples have experienced exploitation and removal from their ancestral lands twice over.

Many APRM state reports that recognize first nation peoples but do not identify them as 'indigenous' (Dersson, 2014). The most notable in Botswana and Southern Africa; the San or Basarwa, maintain distinct linguistic, cultural and social autonomy. They have dominated public discourse with forced moves from the Central Kgalagadi Game Reserve and inability to safeguard their socioeconomic rights. Other smaller groups include the Kalanga, Bazezuru, Baherero, Bayei, Hambukushu, Basubia. Botswana is comprised of twelve smaller groups, however, share the dominance in population, language and representation in governance structures.

The APRM can be a platform to recognise and affirm first nation people's as indigenous. Understandably, within the context of multiple occupations, colonialism and neoliberal development – knowledge remains anchored towards those who currently hold power. Systems of knowledge, education, resourcing, state interventions, law and governance have been built to suit the ruling majority. Whether traditional leadership, higher economic disposition, public office or majority; power inherently benefits those who have it. Although not considered harmful within standards of free market capitalism and colonial era legislature or practice; it has denied indigenous people the same privileges, services and infrastructure to participate in all spheres of modern life. The APRM serves as a unique opportunity to build consensus, safeguard indigenous knowledge and strengthen collaborative solutions in rule of law and sustainable development.

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